
Regional Transportation Commission

Issues Discussion: Challenges and Causes;
Goals and Principles

October 5, 2006

Transportation Challenges

- *Puget Sound area has a transportation crisis*
 - Increasing commuter congestion
 - 2003: 3.7 billion hours & 2.3 billion gallons wasted
 - Vehicle miles increasing faster than population
 - Increase in non-work trips
 - Mismatch between where people live and work

Transportation Challenges

- *Puget Sound area has a transportation crisis*
 - Delays in Freight/Rail/Port traffic
 - Importance - 484,000 people employed in freight sector
 - \$1 billion in trade goods stalled each day
 - 30% of suppliers to Boeing come through Puget Sound

Transportation Challenges

- *Puget Sound area has a transportation crisis*
 - Deterioration of transportation infrastructure
 - Hwy 520 and Viaduct
 - I-5 repaving issue (low public awareness)
 - Several bridges (South Park) need work

Transportation Challenges

- *Puget Sound area has a transportation crisis*
 - Difficulty and delays in constructing new transit or highway systems
 - Example: Tacoma/Seattle light rail
 - Example: increased bus service for work/live mismatch
 - \$37 billion in unfunded projects over next 20 years

Causes

- Under-investment of major infrastructure for period in past 30 years:
 - Both transit and road/highway infrastructure have suffered from under-investment in basic maintenance
 - Infrastructure capacity has not kept pace with growth
 - Costs of design, materials, and labor all increase with delays

Causes

- Public perception of the inability of government to spend tax dollars wisely
 - Accountability to public
 - Public question: WHO is in charge?
 - Who is spending tax dollars – too many authorities, and unclear relationships between authority and projects
 - Public question: WHAT tax dollars spent on?
 - Lack of linkage or nexus between input of tax dollars and output of projects
 - Public question: WHERE are the benefits?
 - Lack of tangible benefits – do projects visibly relieve congestion, improve safety, or provide some other tangible benefit?

Causes

- Public perception of the inability of government to spend tax dollars wisely
 - The Growth of Citizen Initiatives
 - Case Study: Initiative 695
 - Case Study: Defeat of Referendum 51
 - Case Study: Defeat of Initiative 912
 - What message is the public trying to send with initiatives?

Causes

- Inconsistent and unclear system for prioritizing and executing projects – governance issues
 - Who plays role: PSRC? WSDOT? Legislature?
 - What is role of local projects such as Monorail and current Seattle ballot measure?
 - Public engagement: when is there public input and how do they participate?
 - What criteria is use to prioritize?
 - Urgency of need?
 - Cost/Benefit?
 - Source of monies?
 - Political factors?

Causes

- Lack of cooperation and increased competition across local jurisdictions in planning, finance, governance issues
 - Do projects in one area of a corridor simply shift the bottleneck somewhere else?
 - Do major or “big ticket” projects drain resources from “minor” projects with equal urgency?
 - Are projects chosen based on their improvements to the localized area or based on their improvement to the network overall?

Questions

- How do we respond to need to public's need for accountability?
 - How can a regional approach improve this?
 - Benchmarks?
 - Performance Standards?
 - Prioritization framework?

Questions

- Can we effectively address spending caps and funding “silos”?
 - A call for an end to spending caps?
 - A call for an end to revenue- or spending-related initiatives? How do we respond to the public’s frustration?
 - Proper role of Legislature in tackling issues?

Questions

- How do we characterize “inconsistent and unclear system for prioritizing projects?”
 - How do we not play “blame game”?
 - Is our goal simplification, consolidation, consistency and fairness, or some combination of all these qualities?
 - How do we provide geographic equity in the region without allowing balkanization or parochial interests to dominate decision making?

Questions

- Role of land use in transportation planning and governance?
 - How would that differ from the status quo?
 - Would a new regional entity include land use planning along with transportation? Or continue land use planning separate from transportation?
 - What level of authority would a new land use/transportation entity have?